
THE
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Before the Q U E E N

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A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D

Before the QUEEN,

AT

W H I T E - H A L L,

On the 11th of March, 1693.

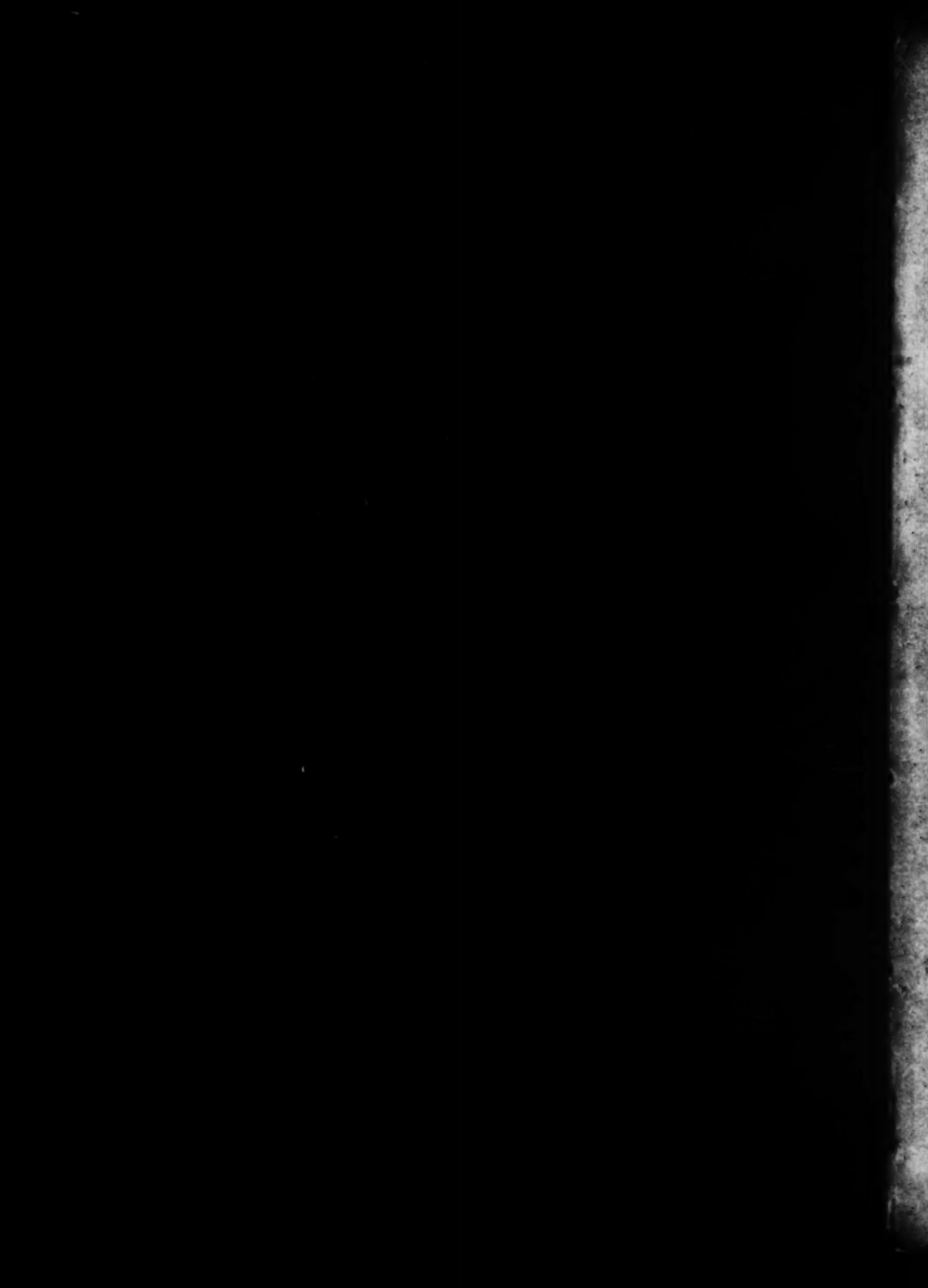
BEING

The Third SUNDAY in LENT.

By the Right Reverend Father in God, GILBERT,
Lord Bishop of SARUM. *Burnet*

L O N D O N;

Printed for Ric. Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. MDCXCIV.



THE
BISHOP ~~OF~~ SARUM
LENT-SERMON
Before the QUEEN.

On Sunday, *March* the 11th, 1693.

THE
PRINTED

By Her Majesty's Special Command.

Before the Q U E E N

On Sunday, March 11, 1844

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D

Before the QUEEN,

AT

W H I T E - H A L L,

On the 11th of March, 169 $\frac{1}{2}$.

B E I N G

The Third SUNDAY in LENT.

By the Right Reverend Father in God, GILBERT,
Lord Bishop of SARUM. *Burnet*

L O N D O N;

Printed for R^t. Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. MDCXCIV.

S E R M O N

Before the QUEEN

W J I T E - H A L L

On the 11th of March 1861

The Third Sunday in Lent

By the Rev. J. A. G. M.

Printed by the Rev. J. A. G. M. at the Press of the Rev. J. A. G. M.

I COR. i. 26.

*For ye see your Calling, Brethren, how
that not many Wise after the Flesh,
not many Mighty, not many Noble
are called.*

IT was one of the earliest, and is like to be one of the most lasting Prejudices against the Christian Religion, that few of those who have been under eminent Distinctions in the World, have sincerely gone into its Precepts and Discipline: many have indeed gone into its Interests, when they found their own in them, who have been much above the common Level; but these have lived so little like their Profession, that they have become a Reproach to it: and what they seemed to build up with one Hand, was more than defaced with the other: while the World, by comparing their Zeal with their Morals, have been led to collect, that they themselves did not believe that Religion, about whose Concerns they seemed to be so warm and active. But when it has been observed, that those few upon whose Tempers and Actions this Religion seemed to have a more real and a more powerful Influence, have been for the greater part Men of a lower size of Mind and Fortune, many have from thence

Joh. 7. 48, 49

Acts 17. 18, 32

framed to themselves the most mischievous Idea possible of our *most holy Faith*, that its Voraries were either apt to deceive or be deceived; in plain English, either Knaves or Fools. This the Jews began and charged our Saviour with it, that none of the Doctors, *the Rulers, or the Pharisees* had believed in him; and that the Rabble who followed him, were *People who knew not the Law, and were accursed.* The Philosophers when they heard St. Paul preach, reckoned him a *Babler*, and his Doctrine foolish: and whereas they thought that none were capable of true Philosophy, that is (in the sense of those Ages) of true Notions concerning God and Morality, but Men happily born and duly prepared; they were amazed, when they saw Multitudes of all Ages and Conditions, and of both Sexes, imbrace this Doctrine, adhere so firmly to it, and die so resolutely for it; that whereas a generous Contempt of Life, and a Firmness against the Terrors of Death, had been esteemed the greatest Indication of the Courage of the *Romans*, or the Philosophy of the *Greeks*, the Christians came to be marked with this Character, not only by the profane *Lucian*, but by a much better Man, *Marcus Aurelius*, as too regardless and prodigal of Life: yet still the World stuck to that as to a just Prejudice, that those who embraced this Doctrine were mean and illiterate Men, who having little to lose in this World, were the more easily prevailed on to despise it, and to hearken after the hopes of another; and to embrace a Doctrine that offered its Profelytes many Privileges beyond the rest of Mankind. And since mean Mens Minds are often as low as their Fortunes, and poor and weak People are

are more apt to be imposed on, and less capable of making strict Enquiries into the truth of Things; all this seems to give a fair and reasonable Presumption against a Religion, whose first Converts were neither the Learned *Rabbins*, nor the Subtile *Philosophers*, neither Men of Authority nor Birth.

Somewhat like the same Observation is still made, if not of the Nominal Christians of our days, for now all are such, yet of those, of whom one has the justest reason to conclude, that they are in earnest with their Religion, that they are neither of the highest size for Parts, Quality, or Power; but are more commonly Persons of a moderate Proportion, as to all these things. This seems to afford a very proper Subject for a Discourse of this kind, to consider and discuss the Truth and the Consequences that may arise out of this Prejudice, and that both with relation to the Beginnings of Christianity, and to the present State in which we find it to be among our selves.

I need not amuse you long with explaining the words of my Text. By *Calling*, is meant their Vocation to the Christian Religion, not in that general sense, in which it is said that *many are called*: which imports, only that the Gospel was to be preached to *many*; but in a more restricted sense, in which it is used promiscuously with *Election*, so we are required to make our *Calling and Election sure*: that is, our being gathered together by the Call of the Gospel into a Body distinct and separated from the World: By this then is to be understood that Vocation, by which

which Christians, as they are called on by the Gospel, so they do hearken to it, and follow it. By the *wife after the Flesh*, may be well meant Men of Worldly Prudence, Skill and Dexterity in the ordering their Affairs, or in the Conduct of the World: but the common Acceptation of this word used among the *Greeks*, and in this Epistle, relates to those Men of Speculation and Knowledge, of Subtilty and Dispute, known by the Names of *Sophists* and *Philosophers*. By *Mighty* are to be understood the Men of Power and Authority, Princes and Magistrates. By *Noble*, are meant Men of high Birth and great Blood: So the Importance of my Text is this, "You Christians of *Corinth*, see that among you, who have imbraced the Christian Religion, there are not many (some few there might be) either Philosophers, Magistrates, or Men of Noble Extraction: but on the contrary, you see that your Assemblies are made up of Persons that are weak and despised, that are of no Account or Esteem in the World. And of this the Apostle is so little ashamed, and so little disposed to deny, hide or extenuate it, that he enlarges upon it in a variety of several very full Expressions; he calls them not only *foolish* and *weak*, *base* and *despised*; but *things that are not*; as low a Figure as Language is capable of; and draws from it two very important Reflections, *That no Flesh should glory in God's Presence; but that he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord.*

In speaking to these words, I shall consider,

I. What

- I. What reason there was for such Reflections in the days of the Apostles, and how came it that their Converts were not of the upper, but of the lower Ranks of Men?
- II. What reason there may be for the like Reflections in the present Age?
- III. Whether this is a just Prejudice against the Christian Religion or not?
- IV. That all this belongs only to the greater part, *the many*; and that it is not universally, tho it be generally true. And,
- V. What are the proper Inferences to be drawn from all this?

To the first;

It is very true that the first Converts to Christianity, were for the most part weak and mean Men: The Arguments which did then enforce this Religion, were such, that the lowest Capacity could judge of them. Miracles were wrought in the sight of great Multitudes, and that in signal Instances, of wonderful Cures done with a Word, of raising some from the Dead, and speaking the Language of every Country into which those Preachers came, and that without any previous Preparation, or time lost in acquiring it. These were things that bare Observation, bare Seeing or Hearing, could discover to any, that would look into them: they required no Strength of Apprehension, nor Niceness of Judging. Men of a higher Form are naturally more apt to despise all such things, and to shut them out by forming a previous Disbelief of them; and setting that up as a

Bar against all Conviction; which Men of a more moderate size are more willing to ask after, and enquire into: So that for the great Argument then given in behalf of our Religion, every Man was capable of seeing it's Truth: and when these mighty Works confirmed such a Narrative concerning the Death and the Resurrection of Christ, together with such a holy Rule of Life and of Morals; every honest Man was capable of judging, at least for himself, that such a Recital with such a Scheme of Divine Morals so well attested, could come from none but the great and good God. It was also suitable to the miraculous Vouchers that accompanied this Doctrine, that the first Bodies of Men who were converted to it, should consist chiefly of such Persons, that no Suspicion could be against them, as if they by the Strength of their Parts and Skill, by the Credit they were in, or the Authority that they had, might have procured to this Doctrine any part of the Reception that it met with in the World. Had either the Tricks of Dispute, the Charms of Eloquence, or the Dexterity of Conduct appeared among the first Planters of this Faith; had they been fortified with Power, or supported by Dependencies, then the Progress of it might have been accounted for: but when Numbers both of Jews and Gentiles, and those Greeks as well as Barbarians, that is, Learned and Unlearned, forsook the Religions in which they had been bred, and to which they were tied by all the Prejudices that could possibly lock them up fast in the way in which they had been brought up; and when they not only embraced it upon the Credit of what they saw and heard, and reformed their Lives according to it, but stood to it in spite of all the

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the ill Usage and Persecution that it brought upon them, so that many of them died for it, and all suffered more or less by reason of it, it must be acknowledged, that this was a very extraordinary and an unaccountable thing. The vast Increase and Propagation of this Religion under all those Disadvantages, and with no visible human Help at all, was so astonishing, that as all the first Apologists for Christianity appealed often to it, as to one of the most sensible Arguments, so it had been capable of an Answer that had taken off much from its Strength, if it could have been said that the Progress it made, was in some degree owing to the Abilities or Interests of those who first embraced it. Therefore as the Arguments upon which its Credit at first was built, were such that the meanest Capacities were capable of passing a Judgment upon them; so their being without all human Supports was an evident Indication of the Divine ones that attended upon them. And thus the first Branch of this Prejudice is sufficiently accounted for.

I go now to the second Particular, to examine what Reasons there may be for the like Reflections in the present Age. Alas, it is but too visible! that tho now whole Nations are become Christians by the lump, yet there are few, very few real Christians to be found among all those Assemblies that are crowded full with those who carry that worthy Name. There are few the Tenor and Thread of whose Lives speaks them to be Men that deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and that live godly, righteously and soberly, like Pilgrims on Earth, having their Hearts and Affections in

Heaven; that are pure and holy, meek and lowly in Heart in imitation of their great Master, whom the far greater part of those who are called Christians, dishonour with their Lives while they offer up to him the outward Shews and Pageants of Honour and Worship. Among those few (few they are God knows) there are not many who have great Advantages in this World, either with respect to their Talents, or to their Fortunes.

Those who have a greater compass of Knowledge, more flame of Thought, and elevation of Mind, either turn and imploy it wholly to base and mean Purposes, to the close Contrivances of Dissimulation and Falshood, or to a loose and libertine Gaiety; valuing themselves upon some sparkling Thoughts, which are directed to the questioning or laughing at the most serious and sacred Matters; which by a profane Mimickry they represent as ridiculous, both to themselves and others. These are the too common Corruptions that hang about many of those who yet seem to be born with somewhat that is sublime in them: Men of a greater Depth in Study, as well as of more Gravity of Temper, feeling that their Thoughts have a higher Flight, and a greater Extent than others about them are perhaps capable of, do swell often upon that, and grow to value themselves as much beyond what they deserve, as they undervalue others below what is due to them: These, if sullen and ill-bred, shew their Pride in Scorn and insolent Behaviour; or if, by a due Commerce with the World, their Deportment is more decent, yet inwardly they are full of an Admiration of themselves, and of a Contempt of all other Persons: they are apt to be singular in their Thoughts,

Thoughts, and fond of their own Notions; they love Novelties, and delight to see whole Bodies of Men called by their Name: they form to themselves Prejudices against the believing any thing upon the Testimony of others; especially if the Matters proposed to them are of a pitch above their Apprehensions. Men of Knowledge and Parts are subject to one or more of these ill Qualities, which do so much vitiate their Understandings, and corrupt their Natures, that they cannot come under a Discipline, whose first Elements are Humility, Modesty, a due Distrust of one's self, and a charitable Esteem of other Men: they have not treatable Understandings, that can diligently observe and lay things slowly and attentively together; they neither examine the first Principles, nor the Connections of things: So that their Hearts and Heads are not capable of that ply of Mind, which is a necessary Preparation to the being a true Christian.

As for the *Mighty* Men, if they are of a lower Form, their Thoughts turn much to Avarice and Corruption, to Partiality and Injustice, and to Violence and Rage; if they are at the top of Human Nature, in high Power and Authority, they are apt to extend that, either to an undue Domination over those who are subject to them, or to an unjust Enlargement of Empire. Unlawful Wars and Conquests look great, and sound big: if they are successful in them, and flattered for them, they are enchanted with a false Opinion of their own *Glory*, so that neither the Blood that is shed, nor the Miseries that are occasioned by them, are able to disturb that Imaginary Happiness, with which they seem to be at present so much delighted. Men thus turned and so vitiated are not capable:

capable to apprehend themselves to be under the Obligations to Justice and Compassion, to Truth and Fidelity, to Moderation of their Desires, and to the restoring what they have unjustly taken, or do as unjustly detain from other Men. If a Zeal for some of the Interests or Passions of a Party in Religion; if Cost and Magnificence, Solemnity and Cruelty in the Cause of a Church, will buy off greater Obligations, or pay for the most Criminal Violations of all that is just and sacred among Men, then they will perhaps purchase a Name at that rate, as well as pay those who flatter them on that account. It is then very true, that the Men of Power and Authority are under such a Bias and so many Temptations, that it is scarce to be hoped for, that *many* of them shall come within this high and holy Calling.

As for the *Noble*, the Men of Extraction and Descent, of high Blood and antient Families, they are often so much mollified and broken by a soft and careless Education, they are so enervated by Luxury, and so dissolved into Idleness and Voluptuousness, that they are as little capable of coming under this Yoke, as either of the former were found to be. The Abundance to which they were born, and in which they have always lived, seems to set them beyond the Necessity of employing their Thoughts and Time in worthy or useful Studies and Exercises: They are steeped in Laziness, and over-run with fierce and craving Appetites. Pleasure sways and turns them, it consumes their Time, and exhausts both Bodies and Minds: a Restraint of Excess and Riot, and a Limitation of Appetite, are Doctrines they cannot submit to; but think their Liberties ought to be as unbounded as
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their Desires are. The ill Example they see, and the bad Company they keep, meet little Resistance from them, and do soon conquer Minds so little disciplined or cultivated.

And thus it is not to be denied, but that the Opposition which the Christian Doctrine gives to those Corruptions, that do but too easily beset the *Wise*, the *Mighty*, and the *Noble*, makes that few of them can conquer themselves, and break thro' those ill Habits and Dispositions of Mind, that do as it were belong to their Condition and Circumstances; and by so doing become true Christians. Common Observation is so full of this, that I will not go about to prove it: I wish I were mistaken, and out in my account: The thing is but too visible and crying; and the Corruptions are too publick and scandalous: Men glory too much in them, to be either ashamed of them, or willing to forsake them. While on the other hand, the few Men of Vertue and Probity, of Morality and true Piety, are for the most part Men of a lower size, whose honest Tempers and good Nature, do more than ballance those seeming Defects in Vivacity and Knowledge; they are Men of a middle size, neither contemptible for their Folly, nor of a sublime Exaltation; Men of moderate Fortunes as well as Desires; who are neither depressed with Poverty, nor exalted with Wealth, are generally the most capable of Justice and Honesty, of Industry and a chearful Contentedness with their Condition; and those who are neither high nor low, neither blown up nor sunk with their Fortunes, are generally the best fitted for the Precepts of Religion. As for those who are placed in the Extreame of Fortune; certainly
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tho the lowest have their Temptations as well as the greatest, yet of the two, they are by their Condition much more disposed to Religion, they are less dissipated and more alone, they have more occasion both to fear bad Accidents, and to be devout under them; and the mean Condition to which they seem to be doomed in this Life, may very naturally dispose them to try to have it better'd in another World. So far I have gone on the second Head.

The third is, Whether this is a just Prejudice against the Christian Religion or not? At first view it looks as if the Truth of our Faith appeared very doubtfully, and could not bear a strict Enquiry, that howsoever weaker Minds might be overcome, yet it could not stand the Test before Men of more searching Understandings. It looks also ill that it seems incompatible with Authority and Dignity, as if it were a mean and dispiriting Doctrine, suited only to Men of abject Minds and broken Fortunes, and a proper Theory for the Unfortunate to take Sanctuary in. It is true, we have already considered and agreed this matter, that there is somewhat in most of the *Wise*, the *Mighty*, and the *Noble*, which bars out this Discipline, they are not fitted to it, nor it to them. But after all, if this Indisposition arises not from any Opposition between Religion and their Faculties, or Circumstances, but only from the Contradiction it gives to some bad and vicious Qualities that are in the Persons here described, then it can furnish us with no just or well-grounded Prejudices against the Christian Faith.

That

That Humility and Modesty, a due distrust of our selves, and regard to others, that Application and Industry, are necessary Dispositions to the perfecting our Faculties, is that which few can deny. What is true Breeding, among the civilized, but the putting on the appearances of Modesty and Humility? And if the appearances of these things are so Beautiful, and that Youth is formed in them with so much Care, how much more valuable must these things be? When they are the genuine and natural growth of our Minds; When they are not only counterfeit and mimicry, but the product of Hearts duly seasoned and well principled. How rough and boisterous a thing is Pride and a haughtiness of Temper and Behaviour? How unkind and un-neighbourly a thing is the contempt of other Peoples Understandings? And how unseemly and brutal is it for a Man to Dictate and to be Imperious? It is a sign of a trifling Mind to affect to Doubt, when all the just Reasons of Doubting are sufficiently cleared. And nothing shews a Man to be more a stranger to himself, and to the natural Defects of his Faculties, than to imagine that all things may fall well within the compass of his Thoughts: Nor is there any thing more contrary to the true Methods of arriving at Knowledge, than for Men after a slight view of things, to form Difficulties, and to heighten these with Similes that tend to render them ridiculous, and then to season all with Laughter and Scorn: and to take no further Care of being better informed about them. That these are Defects and Disorders, even in a wise Man, common Observation does justify. But if a Man

will study to free himself from them, and take some Pains to adjust the Balance, that is to bring his Understanding to a due fixedness and attention, to consider well, and to pronounce slowly: And to have the Scales made equal, that is to have no Bias in him, or Weight from bad Inclinations in the Scale opposite to Religion, then let him consider the Matter as if he were in a Jury, for his own Life or Death turns upon the Verdict, and then let him give Sentence: Before such a Judgment, so well poised and so duly made, there is no reason to fear the Cause of the Christian Religion.

If the *mighty* are prejudiced against Religion, it is by reason of those ill qualities that commonly creep upon the Men of Power. Justice and Equity do very often lie in the way of a present Interest. Impartial Proceedings require Impartial Minds. The thoughts of a Judgment to come, must be very unacceptable to him that perverts Judgment and Justice. He who is not content with what he hath, cannot be easie while he sees that his Neighbour has more than himself: Or that he has that which would very much accommodate himself, and which he might come at, if it were not for such an importunate Rule as is that of *doing as one would be done by*. He who has been successful in his Injustice and Violence, cannot easily receive a Doctrine which brings him under indispensable Obligations of restoring all that he has unjustly acquired. The Horrors of Guilt, the Tears of the Oppressed, and the cry of Blood that pursues them, would arise too fast, and be heard too sensibly by them, if they admitted such a secret Monitor as true Religion would
prove

prove to them. When *Felix* heard the Doctrines of *Temperance, Justice, and a Judgment to come*, he trembled indeed, but yet he sent away the Preacher, putting him off to a *more convenient time*. And whereas no Man is in danger to be much corrupted by the Flatteries of others, till he has accustomed himself to such kind Thoughts of his own supposed Worth, that he easily believes that all others are as favourable to him as he himself is, the severe Reflections that will arise out of this Holy Doctrine will soon take off the Visar, and make him see himself in his own Deformity, and that perhaps in the most odious appearances. In a word, unless this Man of Power and Dominion, can free his Mind from the false Notions he has of his own *Glory* and Authority, he cannot receive the Christian Religion, but with great aversion, since his Nature and his Habits are so totally opposite to its chief Tendency and Design. Yet this arises not from any Contradiction that it has to the true Ends of Power and Government, as if these were incompatible, but from those ill qualities which do so generally vitiate the Taste, and corrupt the Tempers of the great and *mighty* Men.

As for the *Noble*, if the Humility enjoined in the Gospel obliged them to meannesses, unbecoming their Rank, or if that Awe and Fear which arises out of Religious Principles, did sink Mens Spirits, or depress their Courage, here were a very colourable Pretence: But when this Humility consists chiefly in a modesty of Temper, and a readiness to do good Offices, even to the meanest; what harm can this do to the Men of the greatest Advantages

for Birth and Rank? In the performing these Offices, there is a natural Decency and Suitableness, agreeable to the Order that must be maintained in the World. Persons of the highest Form, when they hear the just Complaints of the miserable, and the oppressed, with Patience and Pity, and take care that they be relieved, do the Humilities of their Rank as much as those of a lower Order, that visit the Sick, or serve Hospitals and Prisons. And since the Fear with which Christianity inspires, does only work on the Guilty, it is their Guilt, and not our Doctrine, which gives the disquiet. But, on the other hand, nothing gives such an exalted Courage, and so true a contempt of Death, as the prospect of another State, with the just assurances of the Favour of God, and of endless Happiness. Nor does any thing make a Man so firm against Accidents and Misfortunes, as the Belief of Providence; and nothing raises a Man to a truer Generosity, and a greater nobleness of Mind, than the contempt of Wealth, and that extent of Charity which our Religion enjoins. But if the Noble of this World get into the Habits of Voluptuousness and Sensuality, if they think it becomes their Dignity to give a loose range to Appetite, and to be as Publick and Eminent for their Irregularities, as they are by the Rank they hold, if they cannot submit to the drudgery of Instruction, and Knowledge, nor to such Employments as are truly Manly and Useful to the Age, if they think that Laziness and Luxury, Sloth and Idleness belong to them as Appendages of their Birth; if because they need be at no Pains to help to support themselves, they think they owe nothing

to Humane Nature, or to their Country, and if the little Submissions to which they are accustomed within Doors, make them Insolent and Insufferable to all abroad, then it is from those vicious Habits that their dislike of our Religion does arise. It is from the undisciplined wildness of their own Natures, and the neglected Methods of their Education that this flows. *Herod* heard *John* gladly, but could not part with *Herodias*: And somewhat like this, made that *Agrippa* went no further than to be almost a Christian.

So now, I hope, it is abundantly clear, That the too common opposition that is between the *Wise*, the *Mighty*, and the *Noble*, and the Precepts and Rules of the Christian Religion, arises not from any thing that is justly exceptionable in it, but from a great many qualities and dispositions that hang about those Orders and Ranks of Men, which make that they cannot bear a Yoke that is so hard to them: They can neither resolve on changing those Dispositions, nor of suffering a set of Thoughts to break in upon them, that will make them uneasy in them, and give them much trouble for them: And if it is Visible, as I hope it is, that all those habits are in their nature and effects, hurtful both to those who are over-run with them, and to the rest of Mankind, then all this is so far from being a just prejudice against the Christian Religion, that it tends rather to recommend it the more: Since those who are the most averse to it, are so, only by reason of the prevalency of some very bad Habits and Customs; which the Interest of the whole World does require, that Men should be cured and freed.

freed from. And this appears more evident by considering the fourth Particular, which is,

4. That all this belongs only to the greater part *the many*, but that it is not constantly nor Universally true. We have seen what a Powerful Bias the Orders of Men specified in the Text are under, as to the Christian Religion: But we are now to consider the Abatements that are to be made in this Point. In Fact we find a *Nicodemus* and a *Joseph of Arimathea* among the first who acknowledged our Saviour; tho' they were both of the *Sanhedrin* the chief Judicature, and indeed the Head of the Jewish State. We see *Gamaliel* was not far from it, besides several *Rulers of Synagogues*, who were always Men of distinction in the Neighbourhood; we find also one of the *Judges of Areopagus*, the most Celebrated Court in *Greece*, and one of the Roman *Deputies*, among the first Converts to our Faith. *St. Paul* himself was a Master of the Jewish Learning, and acquainted with the Greek Philosophers and Poets. We find some of *Domitian's* Kindred were not only Christians but *Martyrs*: Many of the Philolophers and the most admired Orators of *Greece*, came afterwards to receive and defend this Faith: And now in a course of a great many Ages, Men in all respects, eminent both for Sense and Learning, Wit and Eloquence, have not only made outward Profession of this Doctrine, but have strenuously defended it, and which is yet more, have conformed their own Lives to it.

If we will judge a little of this Matter by the Bulk, we must confess, that where the Light of this Gospel shines, even in colder Climates, less productive of Men of Genius, yet there is a more general Knowledge spread among Nations that were dull and barbarous, while under the Power of other Religions, than is to be found in Provinces of a much vaster extent, that live in a purer Air, a happier Soil, and under a kinder aspect of the Heavens. I need not observe, what a Darkness is spread over all the *Pagan Nations*, how most of them are sunk even below Humane Nature, and how little the *Mahometans* rise above them; bating their Freedom from Idolatry. *Greece* and *Rome*, the two most refined Scenes of Paganism, had Notions of their Gods and Religion, which the wiser Men among themselves could hardly endure, and which they have sufficiently exposed. The good Laws, under which all States are brought which acknowledge this Doctrine in its purity, produce an unspeakable Change on the outward face and appearances of things: which tho' it does not reform Men inwardly, yet it proves a great Blessing to humane Society, and the cultivation of all Arts and Sciences, that accompanies this happy Light, shews, that it awakens Mens Faculties, excites their Thoughts, and quickens their Industry. All other Religions feed so much Superstition, that it tends to Barbarity: and tho' under some happy Reigns and great Princes we find good Sense and true Knowledge sometimes in the Ascendant: Yet this went soon off, it is not the natural growth of such a Religion, and cannot thrive long in that Soil.

Thus

Thus upon the whole Matter, this our Doctrine is *Light*, and it illuminates Mankind in gross: And some even of the sublimest Minds, that Ages and Nations have produced, the Men of the liveliest Thoughts, truest Judgments, and most piercing Understandings, that have gone the deepest into Knowledge, and have seen the furthest into Humane Nature, have not only undertaken and managed the Cause of Religion with great Advantages, but have recommended it more by their own unblemished and exemplary Lives, than can possibly be done by the most labour'd Writings, and the most moving Persuasions. They have express'd a genuine Humility, an unaffected contempt of the Pleasures and Interests of this Life: They have been pure without spot, grave and sober, yet neither sullen nor ill-natured: They have been serious without Melancholy, and devout without Superstition: And have shew'd that Wit could be lively without being Impious, and that one may be cheerful without being Prophanes or Scurrilous. Now I would gladly know, whether any such whom you may have known, and I hope you may have known many of them, have not been more Beneficial to Mankind, have not been greater Blessings in their Families and Neighbourhoods, and if their Knowledge set off with their Modesty and Humility, has not look'd full as well about them, as the highest Pretenders to Wit and un sanctified Vivacity. The Presumption of the latter, takes off from the true Value that does perhaps belong to them: Whereas the former have nothing that is troublesome and offensive, with all that is useful in Knowledge: They can feel that they know more than others, without either despising them or offer

offering to impose upon them: they can be superior to others, without Insolence, and Conquer without Scorn. In such Persons, knowledge does both shine and triumph, and is equally useful and amiable. None are hurt but such Mens Wit, and many are the better by their means. The temper that Religion inspires them with does really exalt their Capacities, it fixes their attention, and composes their Minds: and as the Revelation of this Doctrine has brought a great deal to Light, which the World could never have thought on without it, so the excellent disposition under which Men are brought by it, puts them in a good way, to improve those Seeds, and to increase them.

But as some of the *disputers of this World*, the Wise and the Learned, have been great Ornaments to this Religion, as well as they have been much adorned by it, so some Men of *Power* and Authority have come under the standarts of the Crosse: they have owned their *Power* to be derived from him who is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. They have not only taken on the Profession of this Faith, but have established and conformed it by Laws: they have imployed their Power to protect and encourage Virtue and Justice: they have studyed the common good, of Societies and the true Interest Mankind. Some Princes and Magistrates, I am sorry that I must only say some, but some they have been whose Exemplary lives have been Patterns to one great part of mankind, and Reproaches to the rest. They have been raised above the World, only to let others see, to what a height of vertue, and to what an exactness

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of Deportment, to what a nobleness of Temper, and purity of Morals humane Nature may be exalted; and remain untainted under all the smiles of Fortune, and the flatteries of the obsequious. Some have reckon'd it the end of their Power, to promote Justice, to repress Rapine, to encourage Vertue, and put Vice out of countenance, and to pursue the common Good of the whole Society, as well as the particular happiness of every deserving Person in it: and have reckoned no part of their time better employed, and more to their own content, than that which has been applied to consider the miseries, and to procure the happiness of their People. They have easily admitted and patiently heard the groans of the helpless and oppressed, and have thought it no interruption nor disturbance of their own happy tranquility, to enter into and feel the sufferings of others, with a tenderness that becomes those who are called, and ought to be the *Fathers* and *Guardians* of their people. When such blessings happen to any Age, how sensibly do all Men feel it? This softens the afflictions of the Unfortunate, which grow the lighter to them, if they who are so far exalted above them seem to afford them but one tender look or thought. It gives a reserve of hope for the Prosperous, who apprehend the Calamities that may happen to them, with a less dreadful prospect when they can promise themselves supplies in Reversion to their present abundance. Now let every Man consider and pronounce, whither Men so made, do not become their power better, and if their power is not an Instrument of much realer blessings to mankind, more benigne and beneficial than all that glitter, all the shews of Glory and affectations of Greatness, in

in the Men of Dominion, the mighty Potentates and Conquerours, those plagues of Heaven and scourges of the Earth.

And as for the 3^d and last rank, of the *Noble*, it cannot be denied neither, but how general soever the corruption of that sort of Men has been spread, yet that this admits of exceptions. Some of high Birth have delighted to distinguish themselves, by their Generosity and Bounty, by their Sobriety and Temperance, by their Affability and sweetness of Temper. Some have passed their lives in Courts and Camps, how little soever these may seem Schools of Vertue, so exactly, that neither the censures of the envious, nor the Calumnies of the malicious, which are the more natural growth of those places, could fix on them, or lessen them. Some have mixed their Piety with their Courage, so equally, That it was plain both were fed from the same root. They have exposed themselves to every danger from the Enemies, but have born indignities rather, than deride their private differences in that Inhumane and Unchristian way, that the corruption of these latter Ages has introduced, with a sort of uncontroulled Authority among the men of the Sword. Such among the *Noble* must needs appear with a very particular Lustre, having in them all that is valuable among the men of their sort, without any of the abatements or diminutions that do too commonly appear among them: Does not their Sobriety and moderation, their temperance of Mind as well as of Diet, the firmness of their Courage, with the modesty of their Deportment, their Intrepidity in danger, together with their pious Meditations, both before

and after it, look greater and nobler, has it not an Air in it, that arises above humane nature, and strikes more than all the false Vanities, and the proud boastings of pretending Hero's?

I will dwell no longer on this Head, I hope it is undeniable that instances have happened, both among the *Wise*, the *Mighty* and *Noble*, of men that have been strict and eminent Christians, and therefore this prejudice is the less just, because not universally true: and since those few among these orders of Men, have been so much superiour in their true value, and in their usefulness to mankind, to all the rest of their sort, there is therefore no strength nor force in this prejudice against our Religion, that is founded on this ground, because the greater numbers of the *Wise* the *Mighty* and the *Noble* are not true and sincere Christians: since that arises only from the purity of this Religion, and the impurity of their Tempers and Morals: so that upon the whole matter, this becomes rather an argument to recommend our Religion, since those who stand out against it, do it by reason of the disorders they fall under, in which if they could continue secure in ours, as well as they may in other corrupt Religions, they would probably like it as well as any other: So that we may justly conclude that how true soever the position in the Text may still continue to be, yet it furnishes the world with no just prejudice against this Religion. It remains now in the last place that I consider.

5th. What are the proper Inferences to be drawn from all this, and 1st. It is plain how little value we ought to set on all those distractions that look so big in the eyes

eyes of blinded and mistaken Men: for if on the one hand they put men in a capacity of doing good and great services to mankind, on the other hand they bring them under temptations that for most part prove too hard for humane frailty. So that they have a double account to make, both of the good that they might have done, but have not done, and the evil that they have done.

The men of Parts and Wit, might contribute to enlighten the World, to make knowledge both easier and pleasanter, they might gain an Ascendant by the superiority of their understandings, to subdue the rest to their Reasons: They might by the authority of their perswasions and the exactness of their conduct, make the World see, in the most sensible manner, the beauty and excellence of Wisdom and Vertue: all this they might do, but if instead of this, they turn the most Serious things into Burlesque, and profane the most Sacred, if they set themselves to face down Vertue, and to laugh away the sense of Religion; and furnish little dabblers with some scraps to support them in their Impieties, these persons tho pressed down with a vast load of there own Guilt, have a huge accession from all those Crimes, that others are brought to, by their Influence and Example: so that by a fatal fruitfulness they are entitled to all that cursed off-spring, That is the descent of their Wit and humour.

The Men of Authority that might set bright Patterns, and have a noble Influence over others, which is perhaps all that is valuable in a great Post, and all that can well ballance that vexation, and the other ill, acci-

accidents that accompany it, will have a severe reckoning to make, if instead of endeavouring this, they have not only been passive and indifferent, but have really perverted Justice, and authorized Crimes: if they have look'd on as unconcerned at many evils, which they might have redressed, and not content with that, have enouraged Vice, and promoted Wickedness: If those of whom the Scripture has said *ye are Gods*, a strain that without such an authority, had passed for unsufferable flattery, will make that, which in respect to their Character, is not to be named, if they who might be the blessings and almost the Idols of mankind, become plagues and curses, then certainly that great exaltation to which God had raised them here, must end terribly: they who have received their good things in this Life, must look to be tormented in proportion to the ill returns they have made for such extraordinary favours.

The Men of Birth and Blood might by the regards that the world naturally paises them, and the dependencies that are upon them, bring vertue in credit, and put vice out of countenance: they who make fashions in all other things, might go far in this too, if they would set about it in good earnest: but if they go into the Stream, they make it so much the stronger, and to grow the more rapid. They run good things down, by a set of bad words which they bestow upon them, they call Religion, Superstition, Zeal, Bigotry, Strictness of Conscience, Narrowness of mind: The just apprehensions of the guilt of sin, or the wrath of God goes for a poverty of spirit, and a want of courage. Such words

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pass upon them, and among them without any strict inquiry, and thus they run headlong into false notions, so that all those great Characters of *Wise, Mighty, and Noble*, that have so August a found, are far from answering the first Ideas, that we naturally frame in our minds concerning them.

2dly, Men of a lower form ought to be the more easily satisfied with that narrow Portion that has fallen to them, since it delivers them from many temptations, which otherwise would probably overset them. A Man of a moderate life as to parts, tho perhaps few put themselves into this Classis, except those who are really above it, as they have little to answer for, so they have little to encounter or to fear. They may have sense enough to know what is their duty, how they ought to go thro this Scene of life, and what part they are to act in it. But they were not born to disturb the Age, to embroil Kingdoms and to distract Churches: they are not Men of notions or speculations, yet after all, if they are Men of Probity and Industry, Piety, and Conscience, they may fully answer the ends of their coming into the World, and fulfil the obligations of that State of life in which they are put: Men of Middlefortunes who are contented and easy, who know to obey, without aspiring to command, and who chuse rather to use well what they have, than ravenously to covet what they have not, are secure from many accidents, and exempted from many temptations. They are as much above Necessity as below Envy: happy is a Middle-region Serene and Calm: or if the Ballance seem rather to lean to the extraem of want, yet they are thereby carried to take Sanctuary

eternity in the secret comforts, which Religion gives: in those two most eminently, the firm belief of a wise Providence, and of a future State: the never-failing Springs of Joy to those who are possessed of them. And if those who pass for the refuse and dreggs of Mankind, have reason to conclude that they are the Sons of God, and the Heirs of Glory; How easily may they bear with all the depressions of their present condition, who have such a Blessedness in view and in Reversion.

3dly, And lastly, let us all consider what great reason we have to bless Almighty God for this *high and holy calling*, to which he hath called us. Let us but compare the present State of the greatest part of the world with our own; how much preferable are our circumstances to theirs? for all their happier Climates, and richer Soils; and how much does the present condition of this Island exceed that of our Ancestors, either in the ruder times of Paganism, or under the later corruptions of Popery? how sensible, how vast is the difference in all respects?

Since then we are called to so holy a Religion, and enjoy it in its true purity, with advantages both spiritual and temporal, beyond any Church or Nation now under Heaven; and far beyond what we had in former ages; we have just reason *to Glory in the Lord*, to value our selves upon the favours we have received, and the privileges that we are under: but if we are under such peculiar distinctions, the natural inference from this, is, that we ought to distinguish our selves from all others, and that in proportion to what we have received: we ought to rejoyce in this light, to walk

walk in it, and to walk worthy of it, and to become in every respect both the wiser and the better for it.

But if we have reason to *glory in the Lord*, God knows how little reason we have, according to *St. Paul's* other inference, *to glory in his sight*, that is to glory or boast of our selves, This is but too evident, and needs not be proved; the enumeration of particulars would be too sad and too long; all is to be summed up in these words, that *Light is come among us, but that we love darkness better than Light; because our Deeds are Evil.*

May the great God so touch our hearts with a sense of all his blessings to us, and above all of his unspeakable Love in sending his Son to die for us, that we may bring forth fruits worthy of them, to the glory of his great name, and to the salvation of our souls in the day of the Lord Jesus. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, now, and for ever.

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